

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8029

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0407

FOR ITFPP

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SPOP

SUBJ: IMPLICATIONS OF WORLDWIDE POPULATION GROWTH FOR UNITED STATES
SECURITY AND OVERSEAS INTERESTS

REF: STATE 301427

1. EMBASSY REGRETS ITS LATE REPLY WHICH WAS OCCASIONED BY CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT HERE AND GENERAL DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING INFORMATION ON SUBJECT STILL DELICATELY DISCUSSED IN MADAGASCAR. AS WILL BE NOTED BELOW, WE BELIEVE THAT AS TIME PASSES WE WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE FURTHER INROADS RE POPULATION GROWTH AND THAT OUR EXPERTISE AND STIMULATION SHOULD, IF NOT IMPEDED BY POLITICAL ACTIONS, BE OF GREAT HELP TO MALAGASY. WE WISH TO ASSURE DEPARTMENT OF FULL COOPERATION OF ALL PERSONNEL AT THIS POST.

2. FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY'S REPLY TO PERTINENT PARTS OF PARA 4 REFTEL:

A. THOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIALLY STATED POPULATION POLICY IN MADAGASCAR, NEW MINISTER OF POPULATION RECENTLY TOLD SECRETARY GENERAL OF ONLY LOCAL FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION (FPA) THAT THERE IS NO PRESENT NEED TO LIMIT BIRTHS HERE. HE IMPLIED MORE CITIZENS ARE NEEDED TO DEVELOP THE COUNTRY. LOCAL FPA TOLD US THAT NEWLY-ESTABLISHED (JANUARY 13, 1976) MINISTRY OF POPULATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE HAS NO EXPERIENCE IN THIS FIELD AND THERE IS NO REAL POLICY CONCERNING POPULATION MATTERS YET
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FORMULATED. THIS PROBABLY RESULTS FROM ATTITUDE HELD BY MOST

MALAGASY THAT FAMILIES WITH LOTS OF CHILDREN HAVE THE BLESSING OF GOD. CONSEQUENTLY, FAMILIES WITH AS MANY AS 10 CHILDREN ARE NOT UNCOMMON AND BIRTH CONTROL IS A SUBJECT NOT ADDRESSED PUBLICLY BY MALAGASY LEADERS. NEVERTHELESS, LOCAL FPA IS UNOFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED BY THE GOVERNMENT BUT MUST MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE SO AS NOT TO COME INTO DIRECT CONFLICT WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S UNSTATED POLICY OF DISCOURAGING BIRTH CONTROL. THERE IS, HOWEVER, AN INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT MAY BE SOFTENING ITS POSITION SINCE MIN/POPULATION OFFICIALS ARE SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH THE FPA TO DISCUSS WAYS IN WHICH THEY MIGHT COOPERATE.

B. TOO EARLY TO JUDGE COST EFFECTIVENESS OF POPULATION PROGRAM WHICH COSTS ALMOST NIL ANYWAY.

C. IT IS DIFFICULT TO GAUGE EFFECTS ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESULTING FROM POPULATION GROWTH. MOST OF MADAGASCAR IS IN FACT SPARSELY POPULATED, AND THERE IS A LARGE AMOUNT OF UNCULTIVATED BUT ARABLE LAND. ALTHOUGH RICE IS NOW BEING IMPORTED, IMPORTS BEGAN THREE YEARS AGO BECAUSE OF INTERNAL ECONOMIC DISLOCATIONS (WHICH ARE BEING OVERCOME) AND NOT FOR LACK OF POTENTIAL DOMESTIC SUPPLIES.

D. SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS, HOWEVER, ARE MORE EVIDENT. BECAUSE OF A LACK OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL AREAS AND OTHER ECONOMIC DISLOCATIONS SINCE 1972, THERE HAS ALREADY BEEN SOME MOVEMENT TO A FEW CITIES, NOTABLY TANANARIVE AND FIANARANTSOA. AS A RESULT, SECTIONS OF THESE CITIES ARE PARTICULARLY SQUALID WHERE THERE IS INSUFFICIENT EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING. SOME PEOPLE SLEEP IN THE STREETS AND THERE IS DECIDED INCREASE IN STREET CRIME. IN MANY CASES THE DEATH OF ONE OR BOTH PARENTS, ESPECIALLY IF YOUNG, PUTS STRAINS ON OTHER MEMBERS IN THE EXTENDED FAMILY WHO MUST REAR THE CHILDREN. UNCONTROLLED POPULATION GROWTH WOULD ONLY EXACERBATE SITUATION IN LONG RUN.

E. THERE DO NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF POPULATION GROWTH HERE. THE PROBLEMS THAT ARE EXPERIENCED ARE NOT A RESULT OF OVERPOPULATION. FURTHERMORE, CYCLONES, ONLY MAJOR TYPE OF NATURAL DISASTER HERE, USUALLY STRIKE HARDEST IN UNDER-POPULATED COASTAL AREAS WITH FEW CASUALTIES.

F. EVEN IF THIS ISLAND WERE ACUTELY OVERPOPULATED, WHICH WOULD TAKE SCORES OF YEARS, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE SITUATION WOULD IMPINGE ON RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, ALL OF WHOM ARE MUCH SMALLER AND ALREADY FURTHER ALONG ROAD TO OVERPOPULATION. AS FOR LAWLESSNESS, ETC., SEE PARA D ABOVE.

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G. SINCE LOCAL FPA IS ONLY TACITLY CONDONED BY GDRM AND IS ALREADY FUNDED AND SUPPLIED BY INTERNATIONAL PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION (IPPF), LOCAL FPA DIRECTOR WOULD PREFER NOT TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH ANOTHER OUTSIDE ORGANIZATION. DIRECTOR WANTS TO MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE AND THUS SUGGESTS THAT OTHER WILLING ORGANIZATIONS EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF FUNNELING ANY AID THROUGH IPPF. SHEINBAUM

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